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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Caracas, Venezuela

June 11, 1981

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The Honorable
Frank C. Carlucci
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Frank:

Thank you for seeing me and for being so supportive of this important Venezuelan relationship.

The speed with which you moved on the F-16 and your follow-through were most helpful. I hope we can move forward to achieve congressional backing and actually to sell a substantial F-16 package to Venezuela under FMS. I cannot tell you how much this would do for our relationship with this key country. Our efforts here to expand relations with the Venezuelan military and restore them to what they once were in the mid-60's have been frustrated by setbacks and bad policies but basically we are on a better footing now than we have been for perhaps eight years. The Venezuelan military are looking to us more for purchases, for training, for intelligence and for friendship. We should be responsive.

Your meeting with the Ministers was superb. The fact that the Secretary was able to drop in gave just the right touch to the substantive interaction you were conducting.

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State Dept. review completed

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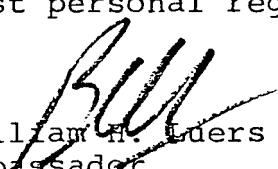
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I hope that in your new capacity you will find time to make a round of the Caribbean Basin to touch some of the key and sensitive security spots. If you do, Caracas is one of them. Please keep in touch.

One final thought. I hope somebody in the Defense Department keeps an eye on this F-16 package. The policy questions, the public affairs aspects and the congressional problems are a complicated set of issues that need to be bird-dogged to make sure that Defense and State stay together.

Good seeing you again.

Best personal regards,


William H. Evers
Ambassador

P.S. I have enclosed a copy of a Memorandum of Conversation I prepared of your meeting with the Minister. I have sent copies to ARA-Tom Enders for distribution. If you have any problems with it you can have your staff contact ARA.

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Caracas, Venezuela

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Venezuelan Side

Minister of Interior Montes de Oca
Minister of the Secretariat of the
Presidency Garcia Bustillos
Director of DISIP Remberto Uzcategui
Ambassador Marcial Perez Chiriboga,
Ambassador to the U.S.

U.S. Side

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger
Deputy Secretary of Defense Carlucci
Deputy Assistant Secretary of ISA Noel Koch
Ambassador William Luers
Interpreter Stephanie Van Reigersberg

Date: May 19, 1981

Place: Pentagon - Department of Defense

Subject: Meeting with Venezuelan Ministers

Distribution: Amembassy Caracas - Pol and Econ
Department of Defense - Deputy Secretary Carlucci

Deputy Secretary Carlucci recalled his visit to Venezuela two years before in his capacity as Deputy Director of the CIA. He recalled the cooperation that evolved with Venezuela. He said that it is important for the United States to work with a country like Venezuela for stability in the area and for social progress. Venezuela has shown itself responsive to the needs of the area and it was a pleasure for the US to work with such a country.

Minister Montes de Oca responded that it was important for the Venezuelan delegation to meet Deputy Secretary Carlucci to exchange ideas about ways to reach world peace. He said that the meetings on Monday with the Secretary of State were "magnificent." Two conclusions were outstanding, he said. First, there were more areas of agreement than difference and, second, there was a necessity to create a mechanism to maintain

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an ongoing dialogue with the United States. Montes de Oca said that there is always present the problem of security and communist penetration in the area. The mechanisms for Soviet penetration have been of great concern. He would like to discuss this problem with Deputy Secretary Carlucci.

Deputy Secretary Carlucci began by examining the essential approach the U.S. is taking to military strategy:

-- First, this strategy has since World War II been based on the assumption that the most likely area for war would be Central Europe.

-- Recent developments have made clear that the Soviet emerging military capability, their blue water Navy and their extension through other parts of the world, require a more flexible military doctrine on the part of the United States. Therefore, we are going to follow three basic policies:

-- first, we will significantly increase defense expenditures--15% in the next fiscal year and 7% following that. We must have a much greater readiness and flexibility. The size and capability of our navy, for example, will have to go up to 600 ships, including up to 15 aircraft carriers and a much greater amphibious capability.

-- second, we must improve the close relations with nations that share our concerns. We continue to be concerned about human rights and we want to assure the Venezuelans of that. Yet, our security must govern much of our relations. We must, for example, have more flexibility in the sale of arms to our friends and more exchanges with our friends. At the same time, we are dependent on congressional approval of these decisions.

-- third, we want to look at the nature of our relations with our friends. We need to look at ways to deepen our security relations with our allies and our friends in the area.

The Deputy Secretary then moved into a discussion of the hemisphere, of our support for Duarte, and of our 56 men training the military in Salvador. We are concerned about the arms influx into the area. We must work with other countries to try to find ways to interdict the arms flow into Central America.

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Deputy Assistant Secretary Koch then referred to the need to explore the question of the significant arms flow into Nicaragua.

Minister Montes de Oca thanked Deputy Secretary Carlucci for the information. He was particularly interested in his remarks regarding U.S. policy toward arms sales to its friends. He would return to that at a later point. The Minister then said that he had discussed with Secretary Haig and Ambassador Enders the problems of Salvador and Central America. He said that Venezuela believes that military assistance to Salvador is useful and important. It should not, however, impede the political process. Military assistance must be carried out in a way that is not hostile to the Salvadoran people. It must be done in such a way to be completely in accord with the desires of Duarte himself.

The Minister then said that Nicaragua also gives Venezuela concern. The armaments flow into that country presents a serious problem and enables the Sandinistas to develop a security capability to move against their own people, and provides the arms for export to other areas in the region. He said he had discussed Nicaragua a great deal at the Department of State and we share views on the problem. The Minister said that we need to develop a global policy in Central America that will enable us to isolate Nicaragua. We want to help Honduras proceed with elections. We want generally to develop a centrist solution for the countries of Central America in such countries as Costa Rica, which is a strong democracy, and in Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. He said that Nicaragua could soon find itself isolated by being the only country in Central America that does not proceed down the democratic path.

At this point Secretary Caspar Weinberger entered the room and had pictures taken of him with the Venezuelan ministers. Secretary Carlucci reviewed for Secretary Weinberger what had been discussed up until that point. Then Deputy Secretary Carlucci asked the ministers how they felt we should be dealing with the situation in Cuba.

Minister Montes de Oca said that when Venezuela speaks of isolating Nicaragua, he is not speaking of breaking off relations. Venezuela's view is that Nicaragua should be isolated in the sense that other countries in the area develop democratic alternatives. Nicaragua will have to respond either to the realities around them or accept isolation from their environment. We must maintain pressure on Nicaragua to move toward elections and continue to support the forces of pluralism within that country.

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On Cuba the Minister said that naturally this is the center of Marxist penetration on the continent. Cuba is developing a policy of infiltration throughout the area which is of great concern. Venezuela is no longer immune from this penetration and must concern itself with the potential of Cuban activities. Venezuela believes the development of strong democracies is the most effective way to fight against Cuba. The Minister said, for example, that Jamaica is a key example of how this fight can be successful. Today the situation in Jamaica is much different than before the election. We have now a political process which works which we can support. Jamaica is not, in Venezuela's view, an exception. It must and can be a model for the way in which the democracies of this hemisphere can promote an effective strategy against Cuba.

At this point Secretary Weinberger had to excuse himself from the meeting.

Minister Garcia Bustillos said that the triumph in Jamaica was important but Jamaica still needs much more help and Venezuela and the United States must work together to bring about economic well being in Jamaica.

Minister Montes de Oca said that we should discuss much more the methodology of the Cubans. The Cubans believe that they can achieve their victories through insurrection and through misinformation. The fact is, the enemy of the insurrection is the democratic alternative.

Deputy Secretary Carlucci asked about Cuba's internal problems. He wondered what should be the attitude of other countries in the region toward internal developments in Cuba and asked was this important? The Secretary said that he knows that in the case of Jamaica that the security problem in that area was critical and Venezuela is working toward dealing with it. What now should we be doing with regard to Cuba itself?

Minister Montes de Oca replied that we know that indeed there are differences that have developed within Cuba, but there appear to be no organizations within Cuba and no groups working against the power structure of the government. The Minister said that in recent talks on the Caribbean with Torrijos in Panama they learned that indeed there were possibilities of high level differences within the Cuban government. Torrijos had recommended to the Venezuelans that they try to establish contact with high level military and intelligence leaders.

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within Cuba. By this route Torrijos believes that they could learn more about the nature of disagreement at the high level in the Cuban government. Torrijos believes that there is a real possibility over the short or long term of serious divisions within Cuba.

Minister Garcia Bustillos said, looking back over his two visits to Cuba, in the first visit he had a six and a half hour interview with Fidel. During the meeting and following it in discussing the meeting with Fidel's advisers, he felt there was complete uniformity on the Cuban side. However, the second time, which was months later, Garcia Bustillos said he had an eight and a half hour meeting with Fidel. What was fascinating to him was in the meetings following the discussion with Fidel, people were prepared to say how they disagreed with Fidel. He thought this was an interesting development.

Minister Montes de Oca then returned to an early aspect of discussion. He said that he noted the Secretary's comments about greater flexibility in arms sales to friends. The Minister said that he was aware discussions were taking place within the US government now as to the advisability of selling the F-16 to Venezuela. He said he understood a definitive request had been sent to President Reagan. The Minister said he wanted to assure Deputy Secretary Carlucci that the request is fully supported by the Venezuelan government. The purchases sought were at the request of the armed forces of Venezuela to improve the security of their country.

Deputy Secretary Carlucci replied that we were aware that the Venezuelan government was making this request. He said that, following his discussions last week with Ambassador Luers, he had discussed the matter directly with Secretary Haig and that the matter was on the Secretary's desk right now.

There then ensued a discussion of how to handle this matter of the F-16 in public. Minister Montes de Oca said that he hoped that the fact that this matter was discussed would not be made a public issue since the subject of the purchase of the F-16s had already come out in the press in Venezuela. He did not want it to appear that the purpose of his visit to Washington had been to seek the purchase of the F-16. Deputy Secretary Carlucci and others on the US side agreed that in any public handling of the visit to Washington the F-16 would not play a prominent role and indeed they would not discuss specifically that this request had been made during the visit.

Drafted: AMB:WHLuers:fmc

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